

# **Marine Expeditionary Brigades: The Time is Now**

**A Monograph  
by  
Major Matthew E. Travis  
United States Marine Corps**



**School of Advanced Military Studies  
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Major Matthew E. Travis

Title of Monograph: Marine Expeditionary Brigades: The Time is Now

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Colonel Mark M. Monroe, MA, MMAS

Monograph Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert H. Berlin, Ph.D.

Professor and Director  
Academic Affairs,  
School of Advanced  
Military Studies

\_\_\_\_\_  
Philip J. Brookes, Ph.D.

Director, Graduate Degree  
Program

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## 14. ABSTRACT

The United States' premier expeditionary force in readiness is arguably the United States Marine Corps. The Marine Corps has been winning battles for over 225 years, and, perhaps understandably so, has developed a resistance to organizational change. Today's emerging security environment is replete with increasingly capable non-state actors and global instability. This environment, combined with tremendous pressure to transform, requires all services to conduct a comprehensive self-analysis in order to identify their role in the future fight, and how they can best evolve holistically to contribute as part of the Joint Force Commander's (JFC) operational concept. Today's emerging threat includes increasingly capable non-state actors attempting to destabilize nations or whole regions in their fight for autonomy. Nation states are losing central control over the affairs of their countries, and increasing globalization is creating international interdependence. Marine Corps operational concepts have been developed which account for this emerging security environment, and the Marine Corps' core competencies are as relevant as ever. The Corps' niche will continue to be as an expeditionary force in readiness, conducting forcible entry in the littoral region as part of the Joint Force Commander's operational concept. The Marine Expeditionary Brigade is the recommended force in both size and composition for seabased power projection in the coming era. The MEB is not a standing organization in the USMC. It is imbedded in the MEF. MEBs currently train only in a time-constrained environment once established or en route to the objective. They enjoy none of the benefits of permanent organizations. Yet, they are identified in both the Marine Corps and Navy operational concepts as the centerpiece of seabased power projection. Marine divisions, aircraft wings, and force service support groups are underutilized in the long periods between major theater war (MTW), and their subordinate units (infantry battalions and squadrons, for instance) can work for as many as 4 different headquarters over a 36 month period. The Marine Corps should organize its three MEFs into two MEBs each. The Corps should also eliminate divisions, wings, and force service support groups. To facilitate this move to eliminate traditional headquarters, Integrated Logistics Concepts initiatives should be completed. The U.S. Navy should establish sufficient amphibious lift to transport one MEB per MEF. In this construct, a MEB will comprise two MEUs, and the MEB would be responsible for establishing, training, and deploying MEUs.

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## **Abstract**

**MARINE EXPEDITIONARY BRIGADES: THE TIME IS NOW** by Major Matthew E. Travis, United States Marine Corps, 47 pages.

The United States' premier expeditionary force in readiness is arguably the United States Marine Corps. The Marine Corps has been winning battles for over 225 years, and, perhaps understandably so, has developed a resistance to organizational change. This is common among successful organizations. Today's emerging security environment is replete with increasingly capable non-state actors and global instability. This environment, combined with tremendous pressure to transform, requires all services to conduct a comprehensive self-analysis in order to identify their role in the future fight, and how they can best evolve holistically to contribute as part of the Joint Force Commander's (JFC) operational concept. In the past, the Marine Corps has demonstrated a willingness to change, but has generally resisted organizational change. Today significant organizational change is necessary for the Marine Corps to remain relevant in the coming era.

Today's emerging threat includes increasingly capable non-state actors attempting to destabilize nations or whole regions in their fight for autonomy. Nation states are losing central control over the affairs of their countries, and increasing globalization is creating international interdependence. Marine Corps operational concepts have been developed which account for this emerging security environment, and the Marine Corps' core competencies are as relevant as ever. The Corps' niche will continue to be as an expeditionary force in readiness, conducting forcible entry in the littoral region as part of the Joint Force Commander's operational concept. The Marine Expeditionary Brigade is the recommended force in both size and composition for seabased power projection in the coming era.

The MEB is not a standing organization in the USMC. It is imbedded in the MEF. The organizational MEB was first formalized in legislation in 1961, and most recently deactivated in 1992. In 2000, MEB headquarters were, again, established. However, MEBs currently train only in a time-constrained environment once established or en route to the objective. They enjoy none of the benefits of permanent organizations. Yet, they are identified in both the Marine Corps and Navy operational concepts as the centerpiece of seabased power projection. Marine divisions, aircraft wings, and force service support groups are underutilized in the long periods between major theater war (MTW), and their subordinate units (infantry battalions and squadrons, for instance) can work for as many as 4 different headquarters over a 36 month period.

The Marine Corps should organize its three MEFs into two MEBs each. The Corps should also eliminate divisions, wings, and force service support groups. To facilitate this move to eliminate traditional headquarters, Integrated Logistics Concepts initiatives should be completed. The U.S. Navy should establish sufficient amphibious lift to transport one MEB per MEF. In this construct, a MEB will comprise two MEUs, and the MEB would be responsible for establishing, training, and deploying MEUs.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

For 227 years, the Marine Corps has been an expeditionary force in readiness that has continually proven itself by responding to the nation's call with task organized combat capable forces. Since 1947 when Congress adopted legislation that formalized the Marine Corps' current three Division-three Wing structure, the Corps has often found safety in this legislation whenever its existence has been threatened or its relevance questioned. Yet, the world has changed significantly since 1947, more so since the end of the Cold War in 1989, and even more since 11 September 2001. To prepare for this global change, the Marine Corps needs to transform. In order to maximize its transformation efforts within the current operating environment, to capitalize on its expeditionary nature, and to transform in concert with the joint community, the Marine Corps should transform its basic organizational structure. Herein lies the challenge.

The Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) is the Marine Corps' premier forward presence combat unit. However, MEUs are too small to contain smaller-scale contingencies (SSCs). The Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) is a MAGTF that is large enough to contain SSCs, and to act as a Joint Task Force (JTF) enabler. The problem is that MEBs are not standing forces. When the Marine Corps creates a MEB, it task organizes forces from its traditional (Division/Wing/Force Service Support Group) structure. There is significant dysfunction in this organizational approach to creating and deploying a MEB. Since a MEB is not formed until a crisis event occurs, it trains only in a time-constrained environment in immediate preparation for deployment or en route to the objective. Also, in standing up a MEB, the headquarters of the Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Division, Marine Air Wing, and Force Service Support Group are potentially stripped of numerous key personnel that significantly degrade their mission performance. At the same time, the divisions, wings, and force service support groups are merely

force providers during the periods between major theater wars, the commanders of these organizations and their staffs remain underutilized, and the Marine Corps is perpetuating poor organizational policy by their existence. This way of organizing and training forces for war is not well suited for success in current, much less, future conflicts. To remedy this problem, the Marine Corps should reorganize in permanently established MEBs. The Marine Corps would look radically different, but the Corps would be better suited for emerging threats and for the kind of operations that will be required in the emerging security environment.

## **Today's Security Environment**

Threats to the United States, her people, and US interests worldwide have changed dramatically over the past decade. Prior to this decade the threat posed by the former Soviet Union dominated the thinking of military planners. Now that the Soviet Union no longer exists, what is the threat? The United States has no peer competitor. President Bush has highlighted the significance of the "Axis of Evil" (Iran, Iraq, and North Korea), and the threat of conventional war still remains, as is powerfully evident in the Middle East today, and on the Korean peninsula. At the same time, the threat of conventional war must be considered with regard to China's regional interests, and, though a remote possibility, when considering what a coalition of radical Islamic states might attempt in confronting the west. Meanwhile, decline or disintegration in several key states might have destabilizing effects on US international relationships: for instance, Indonesia and Pakistan both have unique economic, political, and security situations which need to be watched carefully.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Friedman described the 1999 military coup in Pakistan as a classic power struggle. General Musharraf made an incursion into Indian-controlled Kashmir hoping that the world would step in to settle the crisis. Instead, the Indians soundly defeated the Pakistanis, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Sam J. Tangredi and Frank G. Hoffman, "Characteristics and Requirements of a Globalized Security Environment," in *Globalization and Maritime Power*, ed. Sam J. Tangredi (Washington, D.C.: NDU Press, 2002), 4-7 of ch 2.

Pakistani Prime Minister (Sharif) blamed the fiasco on Musharraf and sought to relieve him. Instead, Musharraf assumed power, quickly recognized that to stabilize his government, he would have to address the corruption problem that had plagued the Sharif government. He set about addressing both the people who were fed up with governmental corruption, and the financial populous (national and international investors) that controlled the resources needed to get Pakistan's economy moving again.<sup>2</sup>

Pakistan is a sample country where the U.S. wants to maintain a stable alliance: economically, politically, and militarily. As in Pakistan, the U.S. will continue to work to deliver development assistance "to nations that govern justly, invest in their people, and encourage economic freedom."<sup>3</sup> The U.S. will also continue to build trade cooperation to strengthen economies, and to assist other nations institutionalize high ethical standards to eliminate corruption.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the U.S. military will continue to conduct military exchanges and build strong military to military (mil-mil) relationships. Failing these measures, the U.S. must deploy flexible, credible, and scalable forces to contain crises or to stabilize deteriorating situations. The growing interdependence between nations is popularly known as globalization, which means that the countries of the world are more intermeshed in each other's economies, governments, and militaries, which by some is seen as a loss of state sovereignty. Globalization is strongly resisted by some countries, and by some non-state groups.

As is evidenced by the actions of Osama Bin Laden (and Al Qaeda), some non-state actors will strongly resist globalization because they see it as an offensive incursion into their cultures and ways of life. This tension results in growing instability within national governments as some non-state groups continue to assert power and influence. The Palestinians fighting the Israelis in Israel provide another example of this increased tension.

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000) 179-180.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2002), vi.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 17.

The growing sophistication and availability of technology is having a dramatic effect on the changing security environment. Information technology (IT) is enabling US forces to communicate quicker and over longer distances, but those same advantages are being realized in part by threat groups.<sup>5</sup> Of course, proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and Weapons of Mass Effects (WME) abounds. The 9-11 attacks have demonstrated the conventional use of Weapons of Mass Effect. There is mounting tension in India-Pakistan relations, because each side has nuclear technology. Religious wars continue: Muslim versus Jew, Muslim versus Christian, for example. Terrorism is commonplace, Oklahoma City 1995, Palestine-Israel, and embassy attacks in Kenya, 1998 and 2002. Natural disasters and famine continue to plague entire regions across the globe. The sale of illegal drugs has grown into a multi-billion dollar international industry.

Given this threat environment what kind of conflict should US forces prepare for? Should U.S. forces be preparing for Major Theater War (MTW), Smaller-Scale Contingencies (SSCs), or peace and stability operations using forward deployed forces? Is there some aspect of the future spectrum of conflict that presents some unique challenge? Even though the specter of MTW is reduced due to the demise of the Soviet Union, U.S. forces should never be caught unprepared for conventional war. The war in Iraq is sufficient evidence to prove this point. The Army's mission is to fight extended land campaigns, and the Marine Corps needs to maintain the capability to fight alongside them. However, the Marine Corps' niche needs to remain as a force in readiness especially in the littoral region, and the Corps must continue to develop conceptual, material, and organizational solutions that clearly maintain its forcible entry role as a member of the joint force.

Major theater wars (MTWs) happen every 10-20 years. Meanwhile, SSCs have literally "consumed" US forces in the post-cold war world, driving operational and personnel tempos to record levels and putting incredible strain on units, people, and equipment. This trend will

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<sup>5</sup> Tangredi and Hoffman, "Characteristics and Requirements of a Globalized Security Environment," in *Globalization and Maritime Power*, ed. Sam J. Tangredi, 4-7 of ch 2.

continue. Sam Tangredi and Frank Hoffman stated, “The international community will witness numerous other forms of conflict [than war between developed countries], ranging from minor internal or civil wars to less frequent but highly disruptive regional interstate wars.” Further, in the next decade, “the most frequent source of instability will be intrastate conflict.”<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile the threat of asymmetric warfare will grow as future adversaries continue to pursue tactics and techniques that are intended to find a seam in US conventional defenses. One way that our enemies will do this is by using anti-access operations and denying US forces ingress nodes (ports and airfields) into the country of choice. As Robert Work stated:

The assumption of readily available forward operating hubs appears increasingly problematic over the next several decades. Moreover, even if such hub are available, they initially may be held at great risk by opponents armed with long-range ballistic or cruise missiles. Future power-projection operations likely will require increasingly complex preliminary theater “break-in” or “forcible entry” operations against increasingly capable “anti-access networks” designed to deter, prevent or disrupt U.S. movement into a theater.<sup>7</sup>

The future threat environment includes conventional war, but more frequently, it will include increased use by our adversaries of asymmetric threats, which may involve WMD. Our enemies will take advantage of developing Information Technologies (IT), and they will utilize anti-access operations to deny U.S. forces entry to the AO. The United States must be able to respond quickly to SSCs with credible, flexible, and scalable forces. A standing MEB would be such a force.

## **Transformation**

United States forces are under significant internal and external pressure to transform. As the President stated, we will “continue to transform our military forces to ensure our ability to conduct rapid and precise operations to achieve decisive results.” He also directed that the armed forces “prepare for more such deployments” [like Afghanistan] “by developing...transformed

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<sup>6</sup> Tangredi and Hoffman, “Characteristics and Requirements of a Globalized Security Environment,” in *Globalization and Maritime Power*, ed. Sam J. Tangredi, 9 of ch 2.

maneuver and expeditionary forces.”<sup>8</sup> The Secretary of Defense charged each of the services to accelerate its “organizational, operational, business, and process reforms,” and he highlighted the need to “Strengthen Joint Warfighting Capabilities” and to “Transform the Joint Force.”<sup>9</sup> The Marine Corps has risen to this challenge and is working hard to maintain its niche in the joint force by enhancing its forced entry capability in the littoral region. It is doing this by exploiting innovation both operationally and technologically, and by improving efficiency in the process. The Corps is not doing enough, however. Although current technological innovations will enhance the Marine Corps’ ability to counter emerging threats, historically, the Marine Corps has demonstrated significant innovation by introducing new technologies and capabilities, but has been resistant to organizational change. The Corps needs to embrace organizational change. The U.S. is on the cusp of a new era in warfighting, and to properly prepare, the Marine Corps needs to transform its organizational structure.

## **How Should The Marine Corps Reorganize?**

The Marine Corps needs to be organized so that it can fulfill its role in the joint force, a force in readiness, capable of conducting forcible entry in the littoral region. In order to do this, the Corps will have to maximize its expeditionary nature, the credible combined arms capability of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF), and its close relationship with the U.S. Navy. As the initial entry force, the Marine Corps should continue to either provide the forward element of a follow-on Joint Task Force (JTF) or a larger army-centric Joint Force Land Component Commander (JFLCC). Otherwise, the Corps should enter the theater with a robust enough-sized force to conduct operations independently in support of a smaller-scale contingency (SSC).

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<sup>7</sup> Colonel Robert O. Work, USMC (Retired), *The Challenge of Maritime Transformation: Is Bigger Better?* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2002), 9-10.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 16, 30-31.

<sup>9</sup> Office Secretary of Defense. *Memorandum: Legislative Priorities for Fiscal Year 2004*, (Washington, D.C., 2002), 1-2.

Herein lies the challenge, MEUs are too small, and MEBs are not standing forces. The Marine Corps needs to establish a standing force that matches what is and will continue to be the most likely scenario for its forces. To create a MEB, the Marine Corps task organizes forces from its traditional (Division/Wing/Force Service Support Group) structure for the specific crisis. Since MEBs are not standing forces, the Marine Corps is committed to assembling forces in an ad hoc manner on a routine basis. Marine Expeditionary Brigades do not form and train until a crisis situation occurs, and henceforth, do not enjoy the benefits of standing organizations, including cohesion and the ability to deliberately focus on training and anticipated missions. This way of organizing and training forces for war is not well suited for success. At the same time, the divisions, wings, and force service support groups are merely force providers during the long periods between major theater wars, the commanders of these organizations and their staffs remain underutilized, and the Marine Corps is perpetuating poor organizational policy by their existence. The Marine Corps should reorganize by establishing permanent Marine Expeditionary Brigades, and eliminate the Division/Wing/Force Service Support Group headquarters.

## CHAPTER TWO

# MARINE CORPS OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS

### Introduction

Proposing, planning, and executing change in the Marine Corps' organizational structure takes vision, critical analysis, and perseverance. Suffice to say that effecting organizational change is hard work. In the study and analysis of the proposal to reorganize the Marine Corps into brigades, the author's research included service transformation and the security environment, the history of the evolution of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB), the Marine Corps' role in present and future conflict, and arguments against brigading the Corps.

It is incumbent on the Marine Corps to clearly identify its niche in the future joint force, to articulate to the joint community this operational concept as part of the larger joint (and combined) operational concept, and to then properly prepare its ground, air, and service support units for anticipated operations. *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare* (EMW) is the United States Marine Corps' capstone concept for transformation. The purpose of this concept is to "articulate to future Joint Force Commanders (JFCs) and contemporary joint concept developers the Marine Corps' contribution to future joint operations."<sup>10</sup> *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare* is intended to "guide the process of innovation, change, and adaptation" to ensure the Corps' future success in its role as the Nation's total force in readiness.<sup>11</sup> *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare* is designed to refine the "broad axis of advance identified in *Marine Corps Strategy 21*." *Marine Corps Strategy 21* provides the "vision, goals, and aims to support the development of future combat capabilities."<sup>12</sup> In it the Commandant of the Marine Corps gives his strategic guidance to the Corps to continue to "make America's Marines, win our Nation's battles, and create quality

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare, Marine Corps Capstone Concept* (Washington, D.C., 2001), 1.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare, Marine Corps Capstone Concept*, i.



citizens” by not only optimizing our current forces and capabilities, but capitalizing on innovation, experimentation, and technology.<sup>13</sup> Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare and Marine Corps Strategy 21 provide an excellent framework for the permanent establishment of Marine Expeditionary Brigades, and their utilization in future conflict.

## Future Operational Environment

Future military response scenarios will require US forces to conduct a broader set of tasks and missions, and be prepared to stay longer in order to restore order, be ready, versatile, and credible, and maintain flexibility and assured access in order to overcome operational risks, and an over-reliance on ports and airfields.<sup>14</sup> This will require the Marine Corps in close coordination with the Navy to continue to improve its “capability to project and sustain power ashore in the face of armed opposition.”<sup>15</sup> This would enable the Marine Corps to continue to evolve its core competencies for success in a new era of American warfighting. Robert Work calls this a “second expeditionary era.”<sup>16</sup> In his framework, the first expeditionary era ended with the Korean War, and the garrison era ended with the Cold War.<sup>17</sup> In this era, Marine Corps core competencies are as relevant as ever. (See figure 1).

Ready to Fight and Win
Expeditionary Culture
Combined-Arms Operations
Task Organized
Reserve Integration Expertise
Forcible Entry From the Sea
Marines are Naval in Character
Joint Competency. <sup>18</sup>

**Figure 1 Marine Corps Core Competencies**

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Strategy 21*, (Washington, D.C., 2000), i.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Strategy 21*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, “Transforming for the Chaordic Age,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, November 2002, 45-46.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Strategy 21*, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Work, *The Challenge of Maritime Transformation: Is Bigger Better?* 13-20.

<sup>17</sup> Work, *The Challenge of Maritime Transformation: Is Bigger Better?* 13-20.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Strategy 21*, 2.

The Army is gaining in understanding of the requirements of this age and is working hard to develop many of these same characteristics as is evidenced by the Army's effort to develop Air-Ground Task Forces (AGTFs), early entry/forcible entry capabilities, and improved expeditionary capabilities.<sup>19</sup> Whatever component forces fight next, clearly one of the mandates of the current Defense Department is for US forces to fight jointly. Joint Forces Command [Norfolk, Virginia] stood up a Joint Force Headquarters in 2002, and is experimenting with the concept of establishing a standing joint force soon so as to test its viability.<sup>20</sup> The Marine Corps' niche in the future fight needs to remain forcible entry in the littoral region. The Marine Expeditionary Brigade is the right force for this task, in size, composition, and capability.

## **Operational Maneuver From The Sea**

Operational Maneuver From the Sea (OMFTS) is the operational concept that supports EMW by outlining how the Navy-Marine Corps team will use the sea as maneuver space in future operations.<sup>21</sup> Closely related to OMFTS, and in accordance with the *Naval Transformation Roadmap*, Ship-to-Objective Maneuver (STOM) is a Sea Strike Transformational Capability which will allow future Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) to increase operational tempo by maneuvering directly against objectives deep inland.<sup>22</sup> In between the MEU, which provides a "first-on-the-scene force," and the MEF, which is designed to fight and win our Nation's battles, MEBs are "task-organized to respond to a full range of crises, from forcible entry to humanitarian assistance. They are the Marine Corps' premier response force [by both their size and composition] for smaller-scale contingencies that are so prevalent in today's

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<sup>19</sup> Work, *The Challenge of Maritime Transformation: Is Bigger Better?* 18.

<sup>20</sup> United States Joint Forces Command, *Standing Joint Force Headquarters* (Norfolk, VA: 2002, accessed 10 February 2003); available from [http://www.jfcom.mil/about/fact\\_sjfhq.htm](http://www.jfcom.mil/about/fact_sjfhq.htm); Internet.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Concepts Division, *Operational Maneuver From the Sea* (Quantico, VA, 1996), 3.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Navy, *Naval Transformation Roadmap: Power and Access ... From the Sea*, (Washington, D.C., 2002), 2-3.

security environment.”<sup>23</sup> Yet, today, MEBs are not standing forces. The very force that our service strategy and operational concept showcase as the premier crisis response force is imbedded in the MEF. Thus, when MEBs are assembled, it is in an ad hoc manner in which MEFs and MEF staffs (and some MSCs and their staffs) are significantly stripped of numerous key units and billet holders.

## **Ship To Objective Maneuver (STOM)**

Clearly, the Marine Corps is organizing for future combat operations in STOM around the MEB as it is “optimally scaled” for a “full range of crises.”<sup>24</sup> In STOM, Marine forces will maneuver using emerging mobility and command and control systems in “their tactical array” vice the currently used method of ship-to-shore movement. Marine forces will be able to conduct combined arms maneuver from over-the-horizon through and across the sea, air, and land in the littoral battlefield.<sup>25</sup> If this is the way the Marine Corps is planning to fight, it should be organized this way in garrison so as to maximize organizational and personnel efficiency, conduct essential training, enable immediate crisis response as the enabling force, and be the building block for follow on forces.

## **Seabasing**

Seabasing is a transformational concept that reduces the need to build up logistic stockpiles ashore that are easily targeted by the enemy and require significant force-protection measures. These large stockpiles utilize large portions of the nation’s lift capability. Seabasing will maximize the ability of the naval services to conduct sustained combat operations from the maritime domain and minimize limitations imposed by reliance on overseas shore-based

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<sup>23</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Strategy 21*, 3.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare: Marine Corps Capstone Concept*, 6.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Concepts Division, *Ship to Objective Maneuver*, (Quantico, VA, 1997), 4.

support.<sup>26</sup> Seabasing will compress deployment and employment times, and technological developments such as high-speed vessels (HSVs), high-speed lighterage, vertical lift assets, landing craft air cushioned (LCACs), and advanced amphibious assault vehicles (AAAVs) will support the “arrival and assembly of a MEB-sized force.”<sup>27</sup>

## **Navy-Marine Corps Transformation**

The Marine Corps will benefit from transforming as part of the US Navy’s transformation process. This is recognized in the aforementioned *Naval Transformation Roadmap* which highlights the Marine Corps’ need to adjust its “organizational arrangements” by taking advantage of new technologies and, most importantly, adopting new operational concepts. Recognizing this, the Marine Corps is dedicated to developing leaders who can function in an environment of ambiguity, and who can quickly make effective decisions under stress. Further, leaders are needed who can make wise decisions in concert with commander’s intent but in a decentralized mode of operations. Also required is for the supporting establishment to rapidly provide the warfighting requirements for deployed forces.<sup>28</sup>

The ability of the MAGTF structure to meet the challenges of today’s security environment endures. The MAGTF structure has proven its worth for decades, and this will not change. It will provide a robust seabased forcible entry capability using organic combined-arms, and complimentary capabilities of other services to penetrate vulnerable seams in enemy access denial systems.<sup>29</sup> It is considered in the Navy’s operational concept to be the “centerpiece of sea-based power projection,” because it is scaled and task organized to respond to a full range of crises.<sup>30</sup> To best prepare for warfighting in the emerging security environment, the Marine Corps must remain committed to organizing, deploying, and employing forces in the most effective

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<sup>26</sup> U.S. Navy, *Naval Transformation Roadmap: Power and Access...From the Sea*, 24.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Navy, *Naval Transformation Roadmap: Power and Access...From the Sea*, 24-25; U.S. Marine Corps, *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare: Marine Corps Capstone Concept*, 4-5.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Navy, *Naval Transformation Roadmap: Power and Access...From the Sea*, 37.

<sup>29</sup> *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare: Marine Corps Capstone Concept*, 7.

manner possible. According to the Marine Corps operational concept, the Marine Expeditionary Brigade is the force of choice in the future operational environment, and the Corps needs to permanently establish them now, in order to prepare for this eventuality.

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<sup>30</sup> U.S. Navy, *Naval Transformation Roadmap: Power and Access...From the Sea*, 38.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **ORGANIZE IN MARINE EXPEDITIONARY BRIGADES**

**“It is time for a bold move. Should we organize in MEBs, and eliminate divisions and wings?”**

Comment from the USMC General Officer Symposium (GOS) Roundtable, January 2003.

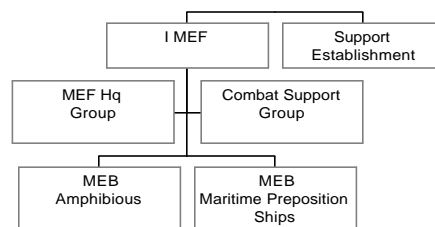
#### **Introduction**

In response to the current threat and security environment it is evident that the emerging operating environment will continue to require a ready and combat credible force, and the Marine Corps will surely continue to meet this challenge. However, what will be necessary to counter threats in the emerging security environment beyond credible forces, are forces that can respond much more rapidly, in modular and scalable force packages, adaptable for any clime and place. This requirement must be considered in consonance with the Marine Corps’ commitment to maintaining the nation’s premier forced entry capability, and the MEB’s unique size and composition that are ideally suited for small-scale contingencies (SSCs).

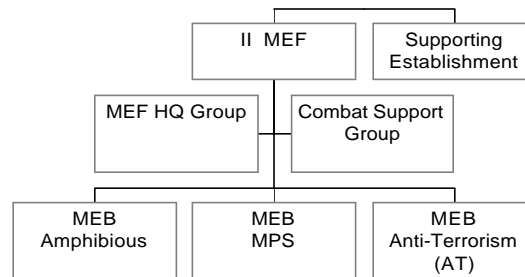
The nation’s war on terrorism has heightened tensions within the Defense Department as the services strive to both contribute in the war on terrorism and transform as directed by the President and the Secretary of Defense. In the past, efforts to transform have been by increasing manning levels, procuring new equipment, renaming units, and/or revising doctrine. All these measures certainly have and will continue to be of assistance in transformation, but what today’s security and operational environment demands is combat credible, rapid response, modular, and scalable forces. To conduct this transformation, the Marine Corps needs a radically new organizational structure that will enhance the Marine Corps’ efforts to fight and win battles in this new environment.

## The Proposed Structure for the MEF

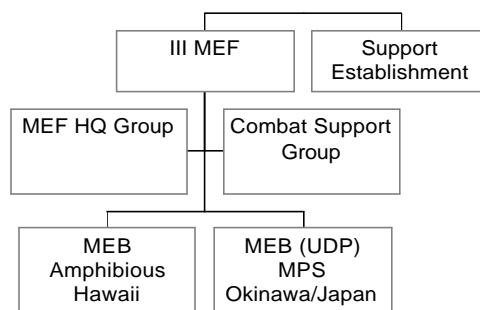
In this structure, the active duty Marine Corps remains divided into 3 Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEF). No change is recommended to MARFOR structure. One MEF (I MEF) is located on the west coast and is shown in figure 2. Two MEF (II MEF) is located on the east coast and is shown in figure 3. Three MEF (III MEF) is located in Okinawa, Japan and in Hawaii and is shown in figure 4. Each MEF comprises 2 Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEB), a MEF Headquarters Group, and a Combat Support Group. The supporting establishment (SE) would provide operational level garrison support to the MEFs, and includes Marine Corps Bases (MCB) and Air Stations (MCAS) and their installation support. Of course, the SE already provides a large portion of the MEF's garrison support. In this proposal, the SE would subsume additional garrison functions that currently reside at MSC level. This is a radically different MEF organizational structure. The Divisions, Wings, and Force Service Support Groups (current Major Subordinate Commands (MSCs) within each MEF) would be eliminated. In their place, Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEBs) would report directly to the MEF: two MEBs per MEF in each case, except for II MEF that already has a 3<sup>rd</sup> subordinate MEB, 4<sup>th</sup> MEB (Anti-Terrorism (AT)).



**Figure 2: I MEF**



**Figure 3: II MEF**



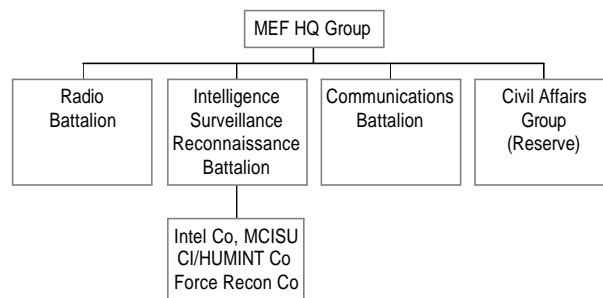
**Figure 4: III MEF**

## MEF Headquarters Group

A MEF Headquarters Group (MHG) within each MEF would contain centrally controlled units that are organized and trained to support the MEBs and MEUs for regularly scheduled deployments and/or contingencies, and of course, the MEF in time of MTW. The MHG would

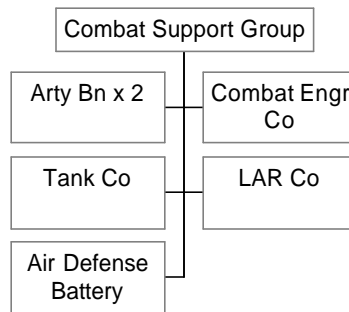


comprise the following units: Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance (ISR) Group (includes Force Reconnaissance Company, Intelligence Company, Counterintelligence/Human Intelligence Company, and Marine Corps Imagery Support Unit), Radio Battalion, Communications Battalion, and Civil Affairs Group (CAG) in the reserves (see figure 5).



**Figure 5: MEF HQ Group**

The Combat Support Group would contain combat support units that the commander would use to reinforce subordinate units or weight the main effort. It would include: 2 artillery battalions, and companies of reconnaissance, tank, light armored reconnaissance, engineer, and amphibious assault vehicles (see figure 6).

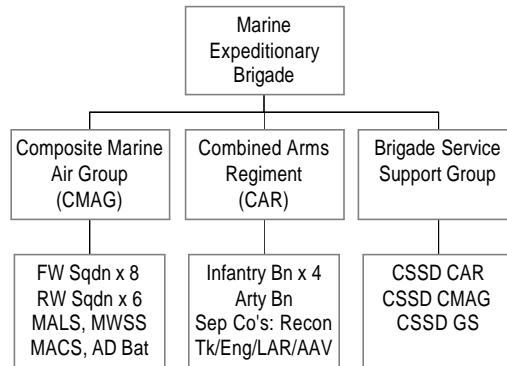


**Figure 6: Combat Support Group**

## **The MEB**

As expected, the MEB would be organized as a MAGTF. It would comprise a command element (CE), ground combat element (GCE), an air combat element (ACE), and a combat service support element (CSSE). The GCE would be a Combined Arms Regiment (CAR). It would consist of four infantry battalions, an artillery battalion, and separate companies of reconnaissance, tank, engineer, light armored reconnaissance, and amphibious assault vehicles. The ACE would be a Composite Marine Air Group and would comprise 7-8 fixed wing squadron equivalents (F-18, AV8B, EA6B, C-130, and UAV), 6 rotary wing squadron equivalents (CH-46, CH-53, AH-1, UH-1), a composite Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron (MALS), a composite Marine Wing Support Squadron (MWSS), a Marine Air Control Squadron (MACS), and an air defense (AD) battery. The CSSE would be a Brigade Service Support Group comprising three CSS battalions,

a CSS battalion in direct support (DS) to each of the GCE and the ACE elements, and a third CSS battalion that is in general support (GS) of the MEB<sup>31</sup> (see figure 7).



**Figure 7: The MEB**

## **The MEB and Maneuver Warfare: Doctrine and Training**

In each MEF, forces would be permanently organized in MEBs so as to build cohesive command relationships, train as units, and deploy and fight in the same manner that they have been trained. As outlined in *Marine Corps Strategy 21* and *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare*, the Marine Corps will continue to fight battles using the warfighting doctrine and tenets of Maneuver Warfare. Maneuver Warfare requires units to operate under the decentralized control of leaders who understand commander's intent and the assigned mission. The future battlefield will not get any more organized, and will, in fact, continue to be chaotic and uncertain. Leaders at all levels

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *2015 Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) Report*, (Quantico, VA, 21 May 2002).

of the chain of command will have to demonstrate initiative in order for units to be successful. As Frank Hoffman has pointed out, several factors can offset the friction of today's battlefield, "organizational cohesion, a common understanding of the Commander's intent, and initiative at the lowest level of the organization."<sup>32</sup> For the present, Marine Corps forces continue to be assembled, trained, and deployed in an ad hoc nature. As pointed out in a recent Marine Corps Gazette article, an infantry battalion may work for as many as four different headquarters in a period of 36 months between Combined Arms Exercise (CAX) training, a separate MEB exercise, a MEU deployment, and a Unit Deployment Program (UDP) deployment to Okinawa.<sup>33</sup> This is counterproductive. On one hand, it is a tribute to the flexibility at which units and commanders can interchangeably rotate between different headquarters. On the other hand, it is a model of inconsistency for Marine forces that are supposed to operate within the emerging operating environment. The Marine Corps has proven that it is adept at task organizing for any contingency, but this way of doing business violates cohesion and does not enable units to prepare for the today's demanding and increasingly chaotic battlefield. Units and the leaders that command them cannot fully embrace and practice maneuver warfare if the Marine Corps continues to organize and operate this way. Currently the MEUs are the only organizations in the Marine Corps that resemble anything close to cohesive combined arms units, and that is based on only 6 months of training after MEUs "lock on." Even so, much of this time is spent conducting necessary administration assembling an organization and on "block" leave, so the time spent training is even less. As Hoffman says, "mutual understanding and implicit communications cannot be gained just through shared doctrine or occasional exercise. It can only be generated

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<sup>32</sup> Frank G. Hoffman (Lieutenant Colonel, USMCR), "A Marine Corps for a Global Century: Expeditionary Maneuver Brigades," in *Globalization and Maritime Power*, ed. Sam J. Tangredi (Washington, D.C.: NDU Press, 2003, forthcoming), 12 of chapter 26.

<sup>33</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Asad A. Khan, Lieutenant Colonel Michael B. West, and Major Michael H. Brown, "Let's Organize and Train as We Would Fight," *Marine Corps Gazette*, October 2002, 42.

through extensive interaction in peacetime and through familiarity and trust that are produced through established and regular interaction.”<sup>34</sup>

The time to change is now. According to *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare* and *Marine Corps Strategy 21*, the MEB is our most likely unit of employment in the emerging operating environment. If we are planning on deploying MEBs, and employing them in support of the joint force, then we need to eliminate our long standing Division, Wing, and FSSG association, and form permanent MEBs now. This way, units (ground, air, and service support) would get to know each other, they would train together, and they would deploy together. Currently the Marine Corps advertises the MEB as its “middle sized” force of between 3,000 & 20,000 Marines and sailors.<sup>35</sup> However, the staffs that operate these MEBs are imbedded in each of the MEF headquarters, and once a MEB has been formed, the capabilities of the MEF HQ have been significantly degraded.<sup>36</sup> To then require a MEF to form a second MEB would render that MEF HQ (and perhaps the division and wing HQs depending on where the staff augmentation came from) almost inoperable. It is time to stop doing business this way.

Since its inception in the 1989 manual, FMFM-1, *Warfighting*, maneuver warfare has been the basis for our doctrine for warfighting. As stated earlier, both *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare* and *Marine Corps Strategy 21* strongly affirm the Corps’ continued commitment to maneuver warfare, and this commitment is sound. Maneuver warfare has challenged how Marines think. It has been taught in schools. Units have applied its tenets in training. It has been helpful in molding how leaders, officer and enlisted, command and conduct business. But, much more can and needs to be done to realize its intended results. Maneuver warfare doctrine is only an enabler. Units have to be permanently organized and given the opportunity to continually train together to fully realize the doctrinal benefits of maneuver warfare within the Marine Corps on

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<sup>34</sup> Frank G. Hoffman (Lieutenant Colonel, USMCR), “A Marine Corps for a Global Century: Expeditionary Maneuver Brigades,” in *Globalization and Maritime Power*, ed. Sam J. Tangredi, 13 of chapter 26.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare*, 6.

today's emerging battlefield. The Marine Corps needs to begin now to reorganize the MEF for future combat operations.

## **Technology's Role**

Improvements in technology have helped transform how the Marine Corps operates, but technology can only do so much to mitigate the emerging threat. The Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAAV) and the Osprey (MV-22), for example, will radically change the ship to shore process. They will enable deployed Marine forces to maneuver directly from over the horizon to objectives deep inland, bypassing the beach and reducing the required time from alert to getting effects on target. The AAAV and MV-22 represent great tools available to the commander afloat, but they are only part of the solution to the increasingly complex problem comprising today's threat. It is time to resolve that improved technologies can help the commander, but they in themselves, will never solve the problem. As Colin Gray points out, "The tools of war are important, but typically they are not the drivers to victory."<sup>37</sup> For the Corps to most adequately meet the challenges of the emerging operating environment, Marines will certainly need to be equipped with the best possible gear, but more importantly they need to be reorganized innovatively, communicating in the same language, trained extensively, and then, they can be employed decisively.

## **Eliminating Divisions, Wings, and FSSGs**

Eliminating Divisions, Wings, and FSSGs and permanently reorganizing in MEBs is a controversial subject that has the makings of a fiery debate in the Marine Corps. However, this debate is one that must be had. The issue of preparing our Corps for an uncertain future, in a world of global insecurity is crucial. As stated earlier, the future will require credible combat

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<sup>36</sup> Khan, West, and Brown, "Let's Organize and Train as We Would Fight," 41.

<sup>37</sup> Colin Gray, *Defining and Achieving Decisive Victory* (Washington, D.C.: Strategic Studies Institute, April 2002), 26.

forces that are more rapidly deployable, modular, and scalable. This reorganization would certainly require more detailed analysis, but what follows are three poignant issues regarding this subject.

First, who will conduct the garrison functions that these three organizations conduct now? Too much of the way that Divisions, Wings, and FSSGs are organized and operate now is based on efficiency and success in garrison. Most of these functions will be transferred to the supporting establishment, but the MEB will certainly have to account for some minimum number of these tasks to maintain local control when necessary. For the most part, the Marine Corps bases and air stations will conduct these garrison functions in support of the MEF. This way, both the MEF headquarters and the MEBs can better focus on training, deployability, and warfighting.

Second, with regard to Title X, the Marine Corps needs to account for U.S. Code (USC) 5063, which states that the United States Marine Corps shall be organized in no less than 3 Divisions, 3 Aircraft Wings, and such other land combat, aviation, and other services as may be organic.<sup>38</sup> Doesn't the elimination of Divisions, Wings, and FSSGs violate the law? Would not the elimination of Divisions and Wings risk a revision of Title X that could cause "downsizing" or, ultimately, the elimination of the Marine Corps? Further, some say, we should not reorganize, because the law "is the law." Title X, USC 5063 was established by U.S. Congress in 1947. It formalized the Marine Corps' role and position within our armed forces. However, if the rational move is to reorganize the Marine Corps, the law can and should be changed to reflect this reorganization. Whatever force structure is necessary to fulfill national military strategy ought to be codified in the appropriate legislation. As for those in the Marine Corps who would attempt to use Title X to rationalize the status quo in Marine Corps force structure, this is a flimsy defense. Legislation alone has not and cannot sustain the Marine Corps. As Lieutenant General Krulak wrote, the American people believe three things about the Marine Corps: 1, "when trouble comes

to our country there will be Marines” who are “ready to do something about it;” 2, in war, Marines “turn in a performance that is dramatically and decisively successful;” and 3, the “Corps is downright good for the manhood of our country.”<sup>39</sup> Marines have sustained and will continue to sustain the Marine Corps. Reorganizing to eliminate Divisions and Wings will not risk the Marine Corps’ existence. It will merely force DoD planners, and Congress to count Marines “in terms of MEFs – our principal warfighting MAGTF”<sup>40</sup> and not divisions and wings.

Third, how will the Marine Corps fight Major Theater War (MTW) without Divisions, Wings, and FSSGs? The Marine Corps would become masters in compositing. Already, the Marine Corps is the leading service in task organizing for contingencies as we have deployed in Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) for years. The MEF would still be the warfighting headquarters. In time of crisis, a MEB would deploy into theater as the MEF’s initial entry (forcible entry, if necessary) and the MEF, along with its second MEB, would follow and subsume the Marine Component Force’s responsibilities. Of course, selected assets within the MEBs could be consolidated at the discretion of the MEF commander. But essentially, the MEF would fight wars with MEBs, not divisions or wings, as its major subordinate commands.

## **Logistics and the Supporting Establishment**

Although much of its mission is focused at the strategic level, the supporting establishment (SE) will continue to “exercise some operational-level support responsibilities” for the MEFs.<sup>41</sup> It will “furnish garrison administration, housing, storage, maintenance, training, and deployment support,” and the operating forces will continue to use bases and stations to “maintain their combat readiness and support their deployment on routine and contingency-

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<sup>38</sup> Armed Forces U.S. Code, section 5063 (1947).

<sup>39</sup> Victor H. Krulak, Lieutenant General USMC (Retired), *First to Fight*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1984), xv.

<sup>40</sup> Khan, West, and Brown, “Let’s Organize and Train as We Would Fight,” 46.

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 4-1: Logistics*, (Quantico, VA, 2000), 2-16.



response operations.”<sup>42</sup> More importantly, the SE will subsume many garrison functions and other service support functions that are currently conducted by the MSCs (Division, Wing, and FSSG). Some of these functions are already being transferred there due to the Integrated Logistics Concept (ILC). These include Traffic Management Office (TMO), Preparing, Packing, and Preserving (P,P,&P), Secondary Reparables, contracting, fabric repair, and cooks. This is lightening maneuver units considerably.

In support of the DoD’s mandate for change and “the need to provide operational support to our emerging Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare Marine Corps” the Marine Corps, through the aforementioned ILC has already identified and is implementing four aims that are transforming the logistical process.<sup>43</sup> Three of the four aims are directly impacting the reorganization of the Marine Corps logistics establishment. If MEBs were permanently established now, the merger of these two events would be summarized as follows: First, Material Command is subsuming fourth echelon maintenance and secondary reparable. This movement is almost complete. Second, second and third echelon maintenance is moving to the intermediate level. This means that these echelons of maintenance would be consolidated in the BSSG of each MEB, and most likely in the Combat Service Support Battalion (General Support) (refer to figure four for MEB organization). Third, consolidate supply functions at the retail level. This means that the BSSGs would consolidate supply functions in the MEF.<sup>44</sup> This initiative is certainly a step in the right direction in realigning logistics support to lighten maneuver units in order to create a more adaptable, modular, and scalable Marine Corps.

## **Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) Deployment Cycle**

Marine Expeditionary Brigades will be responsible for the “MEU cycle” for 18 months at a time. They would train and deploy Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) for regularly

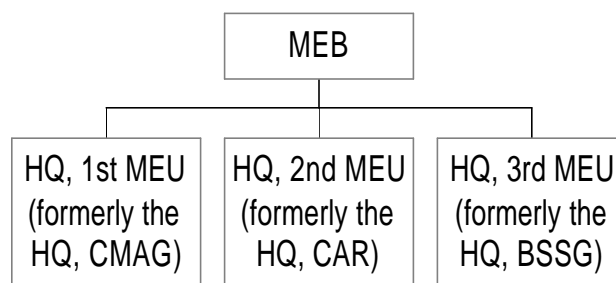
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<sup>42</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *MCWP 4-1: Logistics*, 2-17.

<sup>43</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Integrated Logistics Concept* (Quantico, VA, 2000), 1.

scheduled 6 month forward presence missions. The MEB would already be assembled with its Combined Arms Regiment, Composite Marine Air Group, and Brigade Service Support Group. Six months prior to the 18 month cycle, the MEB would commence its six month training cycle, and then deploy one of its MEUs, place a second MEU in ready-status, and place its third MEU in the queue for future deployment. During the final 6 months of the 18 month cycle, the MEF's other MEB would begin training to take over the "MEU cycle."

The MEB would source MEU headquarters from the headquarters of its three functional MSCs: Combined Arms Regiment, Composite Marine Air Group, and the Brigade Service Support Group. At the start of the MEB's "forward presence training cycle" each of the functional MSCs would be renamed as MEU headquarters. This would certainly require staff augmentation. Essentially, the CAR would become a MEU HQ, the CMAG would become a MEU HQ, and the BSSG would become a MEU HQ (see figure 8).



**Figure 8: The MEB - During MEU Cycle**

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<sup>44</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *ILC*, 1.

The proposed MEB-centric MEF organizational structure was presented in an effort to organize the Marine Corps for the emerging global security environment, one that will require the Marine Corps to rapidly deploy modular, scalable forces anywhere in the world in support of the Joint Force Commander. By reorganizing in this way, the Marine Corps will continue to solidify itself as the nation's premier forced entry capability and its role as the Regional Combatant Commander's first responder to smaller-scale contingencies (SSCs). The proposal includes the radical step of eliminating divisions, wings, and FSSGs, but for good reason. Lastly, this proposal is sound as it would help realize the Marine Corps' Maneuver Warfare doctrine.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS

#### Doctrine

##### Maneuver Warfare

Maneuver warfare has been the philosophical basis for our approach to warfighting since 1989. Today, *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare* (EMW) embodies our operational concept and provides the basis for organizing, training, and equipping the Corps “to conduct maneuver warfare in a joint and multinational environment” in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>45</sup> Further, the Marine Corps aims to “evolve maneuver warfare tactics, techniques, and procedures”<sup>46</sup> to exploit joint operational concepts. Specifically, maneuver warfare recognizes that the fundamental nature of war will not change, and that war is a violent struggle between hostile and independent wills. It requires decentralized initiative, and it elevates the operational art beyond simple attrition. It is high tempo, and its aim is to shatter the adversary’s cohesion as Marines seize opportunities in a compressed decision cycle.<sup>47</sup>

The doctrinal advantage of maneuver warfare cannot be fulfilled however, unless it is combined with the Marine Corps’ expeditionary culture, and the manner in which the Corps organizes, deploys, and employs its forces.<sup>48</sup> Maneuver warfare requires that Marine Corps units organize, train, and equip themselves to adapt to battlefield conditions.<sup>49</sup> By assembling units permanently in MEBs, the most likely unit of employment in the coming era, the Marine Corps will benefit from unit integrity and organizational cohesion. The MEB is the best organizational approach to leverage Marine Corps operational concepts and the tenets and doctrine of Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare and Maneuver Warfare.

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<sup>45</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Strategy 21*, 5.

<sup>46</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Strategy 21*, 8.

<sup>47</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare*, 4.

<sup>48</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare*, 4.

## Does Maneuver Warfare Properly Address Today's Threat?

Sam Tangredi and Frank Hoffman, in "Characteristics and Requirements of a Globalized Security Environment," described both plurality, the dispersion of power among numerous countries, and globalization, the interdependence of political and economic systems, as prevailing conditions in today's world.<sup>50</sup> Some non-state groups, such as Al Qaeda, are showing violent resentment to globalization especially. The world will see conflicts, ranging from civil wars to regional interstate wars. Resource disputes will continue, urban instability will grow, and intrastate conflicts will be the globe's most prevalent type of conflict.<sup>51</sup> Marine Corps forces will have to face many more state and non-state actors, who:

"will recognize the overwhelming military superiority of the United States in conventional terms and seek techniques and technologies that will deter or deflect American intervention."<sup>52</sup>

Adversaries will conduct anti-access operations to block U.S. early entry operations through major air and seaports.<sup>53</sup> As *Marine Corps Strategy 21* states,

"...regional powers, rogue elements, and non-state actors will pose security challenges embracing conventional military and non-traditional capabilities. Regional and internal stability will create situations where ethnic, economic, social, and environmental stresses accentuate violence. Multiple belligerents and a blurring of the distinctions and national affiliations among terrorist groups, subnational factions, insurgent groups, and international criminals will complicate an environment where a direct attack is often the least likely course of action."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare*, 5.

<sup>50</sup> Sam J. Tangredi and Frank G. Hoffman, "Characteristics and Requirements of a Globalized Security Environment," in *Globalization and Maritime Power*, ed. Sam J. Tangredi (Washington, D.C.: NDU Press, 2003, forthcoming), 3 of ch 2.

<sup>51</sup> Tangredi and Hoffman, "Characteristics and Requirements of a Globalized Security Environment," in *Globalization and Maritime Power*, 9 of ch 2.

<sup>52</sup> Tangredi and Hoffman, "Characteristics and Requirements of a Globalized Security Environment," in *Globalization and Maritime Power*, 9 of ch 2.

<sup>53</sup> Tangredi and Hoffman, "Characteristics and Requirements of a Globalized Security Environment," in *Globalization and Maritime Power*, 10 of ch 2.

<sup>54</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Strategy 21*, 5.

The Chief of Naval Operations described the coming violent era as one with frequent crises. These crises will occur with little warning of timing, size, or location.<sup>55</sup> Maneuver warfare doctrine is ideally suited to prepare Marine forces for combating enemies in this threat environment.

Envision a scenario in Pakistan where Muslim extremists' have conducted violent attacks against the Musharaff regime to produce geopolitical instability. The extremists hoped to coerce their government to abandon relations with the U.S. In response to this situation, and based on our friendship with the Pakistani government, our interests in the global war on terrorism (GWOT), and our desire to maintain stability in the region between India and Pakistan, the President decided to deploy U.S. forces to provide security assistance to the Pakistani government in order to neutralize the extremists' threat and to promote stability in Pakistan and in the region. Central Command decided to deploy a MEB to Pakistan for this mission, and since a MEU was already on station, I MEF deployed the remainder of the (already formed and trained) MEB [MEB HQ and 2 remaining MEU equivalents] on remaining amphibious shipping per the issued warning order. Once on station, the MEB conducted an amphibious assault (with 30 days sustainment) to accomplish the mission in support of the Pakistani government. The MEB would conduct operations until responsibility was transferred to an U.S. Army or U.N. sponsored force.

## **Equipment**

Many Americans "worship at the altar of technology." It sounds melodramatic, but it is true. Even the term, "silver bullet" connotes that one bullet that can "win the battle." Technological development has played a significant part in the modernization of warfare from the tactical level to the strategic. The rifled musket enabled soldiers to kill from longer ranges, the railroad allowed Civil War militaries to rapidly relocate troops in pursuit of operational objectives, and the atomic bomb brought Japan to its knees in a matter of days. With incredible

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<sup>55</sup> Admiral Vern Clark, "Sea Power 21: Projecting Decisive Joint Capabilities," *Proceedings*,

advances in not only military technologies, but in medicine, industry, and business it is not surprising that some believe that there can be found in technology a “cure for all our ills.” Yet, technology and its effects on the battlefield need to be put in proper perspective.

The Marine Corps is developing transformational technologies that will make significant changes in the way Marines conduct military operations. The Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAAV) and the Osprey (MV-22) have already been mentioned. There are significant strides being made in command and control (C2) capabilities that will transform the connectivity between the MAGTF commander afloat and forces ashore. It is necessary to exercise C2 over the horizon (OTH) in order to have adequate operational reach. The Command and Control Integration Division in Quantico, Virginia considers this an important element of their number one priority for Science & Technology (S&T) investment and experimentation.<sup>56</sup>

Synergizing doctrine, organizational change, and emerging technologies will realize the intended effects of maneuver warfare. Skeptics of MEB reorganization may believe that the Marine Corps should wait until several key technologies are fielded to include capable over the horizon command and control (C2) technologies before reorganizing into MEBs. The AAAV is supposed to be fully fielded in 2008, and the MV-22 in 2012, followed by the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF). The MV-22 has been slowed in testing by numerous deadly crashes, and has a growing crowd of skeptics.<sup>57</sup> Adequate C2 technologies are pending. However, the success of the MEB in future battle is not contingent on these emerging technologies. The MEB’s success will be attained by properly organizing Marine Corps forces in order to maximize the enabling effects of maneuver warfare. When the above listed technologies are fielded, they will significantly

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October 2002, 33.

<sup>56</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Expeditionary Force Development Center, Command and Control Integration Division, *Coordinating Draft, Command Element Campaign Plan*, (Quantico, VA, 1 October 2002), A-6.

<sup>57</sup> General William L. Nyland, “Total Transformer: Flying into the Future,” interview, *Military Aerospace Technology*, (Volume 1, Issue 5, 2002): 17, 28.

enhance the MEB commander's ability to execute command and control, and deep maneuver in the operational environment.

## **Training**

### **Individual Training**

Of notable concern among critics of the permanent MEB organization, is whether Marines will or will not be able to conduct adequate individual training in order to maintain proficiency in their MOS. Critics state that the "edge" that needs to be kept in maintaining MOS proficiency will be lost if the Marine Corps eliminates the MSCs and their functional battalions, and consolidates functions within permanently established combined arms units. For example, in each Combined Arms Regiment (CAR) (in the MEB) aside from four infantry battalions and an artillery battalion, there would be separate companies of light armored reconnaissance, engineer, tank, and amphibious assault vehicles. The company commanders of these separate units would be responsible for their unit's individual training. This is a different training challenge than is found in our current organizations, but it is certainly manageable for a company commander within the CAR. In the BSSGs, each of the CSSDs would comprise functional platoons and detachments. These platoons would be solely responsible for the individual and MOS training of their Marines, but within the BSSG there would be 2 other platoons with which to coordinate training. This is a heavy responsibility to put on the shoulders of a platoon commander, but this could be managed by a subject matter expert (SME) on the BSSG staff. In the CMAG, the same type of situation would require innovation and keen planning in order to conduct and manage standards-based training amongst the squadrons of the CMAGs.

The career progression of officers and Marines "growing up" in the MEB is worth serious consideration. The career implications for both officer and enlisted Marines needs to be analyzed in detail so that MOS qualified individuals with adequate experience are filling required billets at all levels of command. For those MOSs that have battalion/squadron equivalents in the MEB's



MSCs, this is not such an issue, but for those MOSs that are represented by the “separate companies” professional development is a concern. One solution might be that on both the MEB and/or the MEF staff there would be duty experts who provide requisite oversight on training within their respective organizations. The other imperative is that officers, especially, would have to be qualified to conduct combined arms operations and to have a comprehensive understanding of the ground, air, and logistics domains. As Lieutenant General Christmas [USMC (Retired)] noted during a recent exercise at the School of Advanced Military Studies, officers have to be trained across the entire “MAGLTF,” the Marine Air Ground Logistics Task Force.

## Unit Training

In the standing MEB, units would benefit from permanent organization in that they would build and maintain cohesive relationships within the MEB and with higher headquarters. Small unit training would mainly be conducted when the MEB was not in the forward presence training (MEU) cycle. Once the MEB entered the formal MEU training cycle, MEUs would conduct training using a building block approach, to include unit, MEU integration, and MEB-enabling operations. A lot has been said about how flexible and adaptive Marines have been in responding to crises throughout our history, and though it is complimentary, in the coming era, Marines will need to take advantage of the inherent strengths of permanently organized units in order to adequately prepare themselves to conduct maneuver warfare in pursuit of JFC operational objectives. Focused training would include combined arms training at the MEU and MEB level. The MEB is the ideal unit to conduct joint training with the Navy in order to enhance and fulfill the U.S. Navy’s vision for establishing and demonstrating the vital transformational capabilities of Sea Strike and Sea Basing.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> U.S. Navy, *Naval Transformation Roadmap: Power and Access ... From the Sea*, 15, 24.

Consistent training between the MEB and its Navy counterpart will develop “leaders and staffs who function in an environment of ambiguity and uncertainty and make timely and effective decisions under stress.” It will improve leaders’ capacity to “recognize patterns, distinguish critical information, and make decisions quickly” with minimal information. Leaders in the MEB will develop decision-making skills necessary in maneuver warfare.<sup>59</sup> Consistent training will enable leaders to develop implicit communications based on our shared philosophy and experience. This “can only be developed through the familiarity and trust that arises from established, long-term working relationships.”<sup>60</sup>

## Organization

### Theory

There is a sound theoretical basis for organizing in MEBs. Frank Ostroff, author of *The Horizontal Organization*, stated that horizontal organizations are designed around cross-functional core processes, not tasks or functions. This means that “process owners” take responsibility for an entire process, not just a single portion. Horizontal organizations create teams, vice individuals, and make them the cornerstone of organizational design and performance. This concept eliminates superfluous work and reduces hierarchy.<sup>61</sup> Ostroff noted the need to change today’s traditional hierarchical organization that has been prevalent in the industrial age.<sup>62</sup> He rationalized that the advantage of horizontal organizations is that they produce “complete solutions,” increase the speed by which they find solutions, and increase customer satisfaction through agility and accountability.<sup>63</sup> On today’s complex battlefield, complete solutions are becoming increasingly vital to the success of Marine Corps forces, and

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<sup>59</sup> U.S. Navy, *Naval Transformation Roadmap: Power and Access ... From the Sea*, 37.

<sup>60</sup> Major Joseph H. Schmid, “Reorganizing the Fleet Marine Force: From Division-Wing Teams to Marine Expeditionary Brigades” (Master’s Thesis, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps Combat Development Center, 1989), 13.

<sup>61</sup> Frank Ostroff, *The Horizontal Organization*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 23.

<sup>62</sup> Ostroff, *The Horizontal Organization*, 4.

speed is directly related to cross-functional expertise. Processes in this environment eliminate interruptions caused by sequential handoffs, unnecessary steps, and inter-organizational friction.<sup>64</sup> As Bill Gates stated, “Having people focus on whole processes will allow them to tackle more interesting, challenging work. Managing a process instead of executing tasks makes someone a knowledge worker.”<sup>65</sup> These concepts have merit for the Marine Corps.

If the MEF is the “horizontal organization” then the MEB would be the principal subordinate warfighting process owner. Clearly identified as the “centerpiece of sea-based power projection,”<sup>66</sup> the MEB should now be permanently established, equipped, and begin, in earnest, to prepare for its role on the emerging battlefield. The horizontal (flatter) organization is better suited for today’s “chaotic” battlefield. As Robert Work cited, the Marine Corps maintains 50 higher unit headquarters, and pays a high price in staff overhead by layering standing MAGTF headquarters over its “old organizational structures.”<sup>67</sup> By establishing permanent MEBs and eliminating Divisions, Wings, and FSSGs, the Marine Corps will “flatten out” and become more efficient in accomplishing its mission.

## Change

Knowing that the Marine Corps’ expeditionary nature has served it well, the Corps might be tempted to cling to current organizational structure despite the coming chaotic era. Resistance to change is prevalent in successful organizations. Relative to warfare, it has been called “victory disease.” Doctor George Gawrych called it the “albatross of decisive victory” when he analyzed the aftermath of the 1967 Arab/Israeli War and its effects on Israeli war planning for the 1973

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<sup>63</sup> Ostroff, *The Horizontal Organization*, 28.

<sup>64</sup> Ostroff, *The Horizontal Organization*, 18, 60.

<sup>65</sup> Bill Gates with Collins Hemingway, *Business @ the Speed of Thought: Using A Digital Nervous System* (New York: Warner Books, 1999), 289-290.

<sup>66</sup> U.S. Navy, *Naval Transformation Roadmap: Power and Access ... From the Sea*, 38.

<sup>67</sup> Work, *The Challenge of Maritime Transformation: Is Bigger Better?* 85-86.

Yom Kippur War/October War.<sup>68</sup> What has brought victory to militaries in past wars has often been seen as what will produce victory in the next war. Unfortunately, this attitude has brought peril to many armies throughout history. Richard Sinnreich and Williamson Murray wrote that the Prussians provide an excellent example of an army that effectively adapted both its organization and methodology in concert with evolving technological development after the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo and their victory over the Austrians at Koniggratz 51 years later. The Prussians created a formal system of professional military education where their officers were intellectually and psychologically prepared for war's confusion and uncertainty, and they successfully adapted methods and organizations to utilize the railroad, Dreyse's breech-loading rifle, and the telegraph. Essentially, the Prussians adapted their military methods to changing requirements and capabilities, and it enabled them to defeat the Austrians in 1866 and the French in 1870.<sup>69</sup> Sensing that task organized MAGTFs have worked in the past, the Corps might think that there is good reason to believe that they, even if assembled at the point of crisis, will work in the future.

As Hoffman stated, the tension is "between preserving that which has met the needs of the past and adapting to the challenge of change in a confusing and uncertain future."<sup>70</sup> The most adaptive military organizations combine "intellectual curiosity and relentless improvement," which includes rigorous evaluation of both "old assumptions and new proposals."<sup>71</sup> The Marine Corps certainly demonstrated institutional adaptation in the 1920s and 1930s when they created the doctrinal foundation and capabilities for amphibious warfare. Their effort paid off, and after 20 years of research and experimentation, they had assembled the necessary components for

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<sup>68</sup> Doctor George W. Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War: The Albatross of Decisive Victory*, (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1996).

<sup>69</sup> Colonel Richard Sinnreich, USA (Retired) and Professor Williamson Murray, "Joint Warfighting in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 2002), 1-2.

<sup>70</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, "A Marine Corps for a Global Century: Expeditionary Maneuver Brigades," in *Globalization and Maritime Power*, 16 of ch 26.

<sup>71</sup> Hoffman, "A Marine Corps for a Global Century: Expeditionary Maneuver Brigades," in *Globalization and Maritime Power*, 16 of ch 26.

meeting U.S. strategic needs in the Pacific Theater.<sup>72</sup> As in the 1920s and 1930s, the Marine needs to adapt today by transforming its organizational structure.

## History of the MEB

In his paper, “Evolution of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade,” Michael West, succinctly summarized the history of the MEB. The Corps has established and deployed MEBs on several occasions throughout its history. In structure, MEBs have varied from 5,000 to 16,000 Marines. With respect to permanence, they have been the exception rather than the rule. With respect to employment, they have been used in the whole range of conflict, but are ideally suited for smaller-scale contingencies.<sup>73</sup> In response to the Harris Board in 1951, HQMC believed that it should design and establish composite air-ground staffs for air-ground task organizations. Additional study and analysis followed, and in 1962, the Marine Corps published Marine Corps Order (MCO) 3120.3, “The Organization of Marine Air-Ground Task Forces” which formally defined the MEU, MEB, and MEF organizations, though none of these organizations were permanently organized at the time. Marine Corps Order 3120.3 detailed that the MEB was to be organized to accomplish a limited mission and that the MEB, upon accomplishment of its mission, was to be absorbed by a Marine Expeditionary Force.<sup>74</sup> A 1964 article in Marine Corps Gazette recommended maintaining permanent (MEU and) MEB staffs in order to prepare the Marine Corps for its most probably initial echelon of deployment. In the 1970s the NATO focus compelled the Marine Corps to emphasize the Marine Amphibious Brigade (MAB) as the lead element of a Marine Amphibious Force (MAF). The 1976 Haynes Report rationalized that the MAF rather than MAB receive the most focus in force structure planning. However, throughout

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<sup>72</sup> Hoffman, “A Marine Corps for a Global Century: Expeditionary Maneuver Brigades,” in *Globalization and Maritime Power*, 17 of ch 26.

<sup>73</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Michael B. West, “The Evolution of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade” (School of Advanced Warfighting, Marine Corps University, 1999), 1-2.

<sup>74</sup> West, “The Evolution of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade,” 2-3.

the 1970s and 1980s MABs continued to be employed globally employed in exercises and smaller-scale operations.<sup>75</sup>

In the early 1980s, the Maritime Preposition Ship (MPS) program was developed, and this, in many respects, led the Marine Corps to create permanent MEB HQs. Each MPS squadron (MPSRON) was designed to outfit a MEB. The 1982 General Officer Symposium (GOS) developed and approved the establishment of three MAF planning headquarters and three permanent MAB command elements. The MAF headquarters was supposed to be a nucleus staff that would subsume a MAB command element to form an operational MAF. Marine Amphibious Brigades were designated as either amphibious or MPS MABs. The DC/S, Plans, Policy & Operations, in 1983 stated that by disbanding MAGTF command structures after every exercise, the Corps was losing the benefit of continuity. “To ad hoc the headquarters of a MAGTF at any level, if combat is imminent, is sloppy at best and disastrous at worst.” He also stated that the permanent MAGTF headquarters provided the best combination of stability and flexibility.<sup>76</sup>

General Al Gray reaffirmed the Corps’ commitment to the permanent MEB when he approved the 1989 Marine Corps Master Plan that focused the Corps on the lower end of the spectrum of conflict. However, after Desert Storm, the 1991 Force Structure Planning Group decided to deactivate the permanent MEB headquarters based on the primacy of the MEF as the Corps’ warfighter. The FSPG decided that the MEB could not command and control a joint task force, especially the assigned operational aviation units. Future conflicts were assessed as needing a MEF, and the MEB was not seen as having the size nor having the combat power to have a functional role. The MEB command elements were deactivated to help the Corps meet an end strength goal of 159,000, and the FSPG envisioned the decision to cut division headquarters

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<sup>75</sup> West, “The Evolution of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade,” 4-6.

<sup>76</sup> West, “The Evolution of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade,” 6-9.

as too risky in that Congress might then view “vertical cuts” or the elimination of brigades as an attractive option.<sup>77</sup>

In 2000 General Jones reestablished MEBs, stating that the MEF (Fwd) concept had not been clearly communicated to the joint community, especially to the regional combatant commanders and their staffs. Clearly, from the current Marine Corps operational concept, *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare*, the MEB is envisioned as the premier crises response force. The problem remains though that these headquarters are still imbedded in the MEF staffs. It is time to permanently establish them.

## The MEF

There is no doubt that the Marine Corps’ operational warfighter is the MEF as is currently being demonstrated in the Middle East. In a recent Marine Corps Gazette, Robert Richardson recommended that the Marine Corps establish only one MEF headquarters, noting that “current doctrine and technology make it possible for a single MEF command element (CE) to coordinate the activity of multiple divisions and wings from geographically distant locations.” He explained that crisis-action modules (CAM) from each combatant commander could be incorporated into the MEF headquarters.<sup>78</sup> The CAMs address the pertinent topic of consolidation to one MEF headquarters, and while it is a novel approach, the span of control for one MEF headquarters would be too great. Doctrine and technology are tremendous enablers, but the threats represented across the different regional combatant commands require more than one MEF headquarters, so that each MEF HQ can focus regionally and properly prepare for crises in their area of operations. Additionally, having multiple MEF HQs eliminates the need for one MEF to fight simultaneous MTWs, which would be incredibly difficult, if not impossible.

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<sup>77</sup> West, “The Evolution of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade,” 11-13.

<sup>78</sup> Captain Robert B. Richardson, “EMW in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: How Do We Get There?” *Marine Corps Gazette*, September 2002, 96.

Manning two MEBs within III MEF presents a unique challenge. In the Asia Pacific, III MEF retains responsibilities that require the Marine Corps to station two MEBs there. The Marine Corps must find a better way to man III MEF. John Quinn summarized the III MEF/UDP situation well when he wrote his 1999 Marine Corps Gazette article. Infantry battalions and helicopter squadrons rotate to Okinawa and Iwakuni to fulfill UDP requirements on a 6-7 month deployment, but it takes 2-3 months to get them acceptably integrated into a combat team. Quinn recommended that the Marine Corps adopt a two year unaccompanied tour policy, and that this policy, in concert with the already existing 3 year accompanied tour policy, would enable III MEF to eliminate the need for the unit deployment program, and to man its staff and major subordinate commands at an acceptable level. By doing this, 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment and Marine Air Group 36 would maintain acceptable manning levels and alleviate the gaps in readiness caused by the turnover of CONUS units.<sup>79</sup> Forcing Marines to accept orders to Okinawa for 2 years unaccompanied is unacceptable, as Quinn supposes, but his alternate solution of manning 4<sup>th</sup> Marines with a combination of unit cohesion Marines in the rifle companies, and one & three year tour Marines in headquarters and weapons companies, may have some merit. Regardless of the solution, between 3<sup>rd</sup> Marines and MAG 24 in Hawaii, 4<sup>th</sup> Marines in Okinawa, and MAG 36 in Iwakuni, the Marine Corps needs two MEBs in III MEF.

### Compositing MEBs Within a MEF for MTW

Scalable forces are required for future warfighting. Frank Ostroff, noted earlier, pointed out that to maximize efficiency in an organization, sub-elements within that organization became process owners, not just task owners. In this proposed MEF, the MEB is the process owner, and is capable of fighting the single battle (deep, close, rear) and coordinating ground, air, and logistical actions. Subsequent MEBs would be employed per the MEF commander's operational mission and intent, and multiple MEBs could fight side by side. Elements of each MEB could be

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<sup>79</sup> Major John T. Quinn II, "Reconsidering Our Modus Operandi," *Marine Corps Gazette*, April



merged pending the commander's intent. This organizational structure is different than the traditional division/wing team, but ultimately the MEF commander can employ the MEBs however he desires as he designs the operation. Once the entire MEF is assembled in a MTW, the MEF commander would be fighting in his area of operations with two subordinate MEB commanders. Each MEB commander would have his own ground, air, and service support forces to control under the operational command of the MEF commander.

## The Support Establishment

The support establishment needs to be reconfigured to maximize its role as the 5<sup>th</sup> element in the MAGTF. Necessary garrison support functions, currently conducted by the MSCs (Divisions, Wings, and FSSGs), will have to be divided up between the support establishment (bases and stations), the MEF, and the MEB. In order to make maneuver units lighter, faster, and more adaptable, the Integrated Logistics Concept (ILC) is in the process of relocating numerous functions within the MEF from the ground and air maneuver forces to the support establishment, to include 4<sup>th</sup> echelon maintenance and Preparing, Preserving, and Packaging, for example.

In the wing, crash-fire-rescue (CFR), weather, expeditionary airfield, and fuels sections work with the base/station, and this arrangement provides excellent support to the bases and stations. The problem comes when the Wing has to deploy. The air station, which has grown increasingly dependent on Wing support, is left without dedicated Marines to adequately do this work. Civilianizing various billets in the bases has proved to be the answer for some bases/stations, as the specific (and necessary) task to be performed is not jeopardized by the possibility of a deployment.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps, civilianizing more of these billets in the various base/station staffs would be the answer.

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1999, 36.

<sup>80</sup> Lieutenant Colonel David L. Nicholson, MWSG-27 Operations Officer, electronic mail to author, 12 February 2003.

For mission success, deploying forces need to accomplish mission essential tasks in support of the operational commander. In the wing, for example, much of the MWSS capability is required immediately upon employment in an area of operations in order to enable the ACE commander to support the MAGTF commander.<sup>81</sup> If aviation ground support were stripped from the current MWSG, and centrally located in the BSSGs of the MEBs, this reorganization would certainly limit the responsiveness of the composite MWSS within the Composite Marine Air Groups. As General Nyland stated, Marine aviation is unique, because it can “fly into a theater, build an expeditionary airfield, sustain itself out of that airfield and do in a timeline no one else can match.”<sup>82</sup> This would have to be accounted for in the design and composition of the combat support and combat service support elements in both the ground and air elements of the MEB. Clearly, the MEB cannot be combat credible, modular, and scalable if it does not have the appropriate logistics support to be self-contained in combat. This is the dividing line between what units and functions are placed in the supporting establishment vice the maneuver units of the MEF.

Organizing the Marine Corps in permanent MEBs makes sense. Preparing the Marine Corps to face today’s emerging threat will require transformational vision, leadership, and comprehensive analysis. Today’s threat requires rapidly deployable Marine Corps forces. Eliminating divisions, wings, and force service support groups would be a bold move, but it would enable the Marine Corps to develop a flatter command structure which that would empower the MEB commander to be the MEF’s principal warfighting process owner. The MEB is ideally suited for smaller-scale contingencies that will continue to demand U.S. Marine Corps forces in this expeditionary era. Our maneuver warfare doctrine is sound. Technology will enhance our robust capabilities. Training will be much more productive if we are organized in

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<sup>81</sup> Brigadier General Frank G. Panter, former CO, MWSG-27, “Right Sizing the MWSG and MWSS,” Brief to General Nyland, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, May 2001.

<sup>82</sup> General William L. Nyland, “Total Transformer: Flying into the Future,” interview, *Military Aerospace Technology*, 18.

MEBs. Organizing in permanent MEBs will help synergize Marine Corps forces for today's threat environment.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Challenge to Change for Today's Environment**

Successful organizations are typically resistant to change. The United States Marine Corps is a classic example of a military organization trying to maintain both its expeditionary nature and its MAGTF deployment model against a backdrop of global instability. Meanwhile, the Corps must meet the challenge to transform as directed by the President and Secretary of Defense; responding to global threat groups rapidly, in modular and scalable force packages is critical. The Marine Corps' expeditionary nature and commitment to warfighting in MAGTFs has served it and the nation well. However, the emergence of nonstate groups demonstrating violent resistance to rapid globalization, and the growing proliferation of biological and information technologies, and weapons of mass destruction has helped produce increasing global instability. Nations are under tremendous pressure to maintain political, economic, and military stability, and the United States is committed to promoting stability, and providing security assistance around the world. Not to discount its commitments in major theater war, but the Marine Corps needs to reorganize for the most likely threat environment in the coming era, the smaller-scale contingency.

Title X US Code Section 5063 provides ample reason for some Marine Corps leaders to resist change that would eliminate divisions, wings, and force service support groups. Relying on 55-year-old legislation that has served the Marine Corps well, though, is not rational in the face of today's threat. The Marine Corps should be organized however it would best meet today's emerging threat in smaller-scale contingencies. The MEB would represent the Marine Corps' middle sized force. It would be flexible enough to meet challenges either in MOOTW or in high intensity combat. Organized in MEBs, the Marine Corps would be fully capable to rapidly scale

up or down the spectrum of conflict using its three basic units of employment, the MEU and the MEB from the seabase, and the MEF for MTW. The Marine Corps, using this permanent organizational structure, will demonstrate the necessary modularity to conduct operations as part of the Joint Force Commander's force, or independently in concert with the U.S. Navy.

## **Doctrine, Training, Equipment**

Given the mandate to transform in order to meet the challenges of the global security environment, the Marine Corps must respond in a manner that both supports the global war on terrorism (GWOT) and enhances its expeditionary nature. Aligning doctrine, organization, training, and equipment to maximize transformation in the face of today's current threat is critical. The Marine Corps' maneuver warfare doctrine is sound. It prepares Marine Corps leaders for battlefield uncertainty that will continue to abound in future warfighting, and equips them to make decisions that take advantage of enemy weaknesses within the constraints of the commander's intent, and assures mission accomplishment. Invaluable training will be enhanced under the proposed reorganization as unit leaders and Marines enjoy the inherent cohesion of permanently established MEBs. As evidenced by the MV-22 (Osprey) and the Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAAV), revolutionary technologies will be made available to the MAGTF that will help enable it to realize *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare*.

## **Organizational Approach**

But most importantly, organizational change must be effected in order to fully realize the tenets of maneuver warfare. Establishing permanent MEBs will synergize the soundness of maneuver warfare doctrine, transformational technologies, and consistent training. By taking advantage of its relationship with the U.S. Navy, the Marine Corps, in using the MEB as the centerpiece of seabased power projection, will meet today's security challenges in the littoral region. Marine Expeditionary Brigades, by virtue of their size and composition, will become the

Joint Force Commander's forced-entry force of choice. The most enduring path to effective transformation is through organizational change.

The Marine Corps will continue to showcase the MAGTF in future warfighting as part of the Navy-Marine Corps team. Naval expeditionary forces will demonstrate Sea Strike capabilities and deploy in Expeditionary Strike Groups (ESGs), and will conduct operations in support of the Joint Force Commander. Naval expeditionary forces will have a distinct advantage in the emerging operational environment maneuvering against adversaries who conduct anti-access operations aimed at denying U.S. forces access nodes (ports and airfields) in the area of operations. Operating from the seabase, Marine Expeditionary Brigades, permanently organized and trained, and utilizing the doctrinal tenets of maneuver warfare, will be ready for today's chaotic battlefield. Actions of leaders at all levels will be well coordinated with senior and subordinate commanders, having rehearsed their tactics, techniques, and procedures, and established implicit communications within the MEB.

## **Recommendations**

Transforming Marine Corps forces to become more flexible, modular and scalable within the joint fight can best be realized by establishing permanent MEBs, and eliminating divisions, wings, and FSSGs. Clearly, within the Navy-Marine Corps team, the MEB is the most likely unit of employment in what will continue to be the Marine Corps' role in the JFC's area of operations in the coming era, forcible entry from the sea.

The Marine Corps needs to make the following organizational changes now: one, establish two permanent MEB HQs, a MEF headquarters group, and a combat support group within each MEF, and permanently assign forces as depicted in figures six, four, and five respectively, and two, eliminate divisions, wings, and FSSGs.

Additionally the Marine Corps must continue ILC-initiated actions to relieve maneuver units of much of their garrison support functions, and complete the supporting establishment

transformation that will fully realize it as the '5<sup>th</sup> element of the MAGTF.' Each MEF must provide oversight to both individual and unit training programs especially in low density MOSs, in order to ensure that MOS-qualified (and experienced) Marines are filling required billets at all levels of command. This career progression training will be especially critical for officers who will be expected to operate in all domains of the MAGTF including air, ground, and logistics.

The Marine Corps must soon field command and control technologies to support OTH communications between the commander afloat and forces ashore inland. The command and control structure must enable the MEB commander to communicate as a JTF commander, and to conduct intelligence and air operations accordingly. The MV-22 and AAV, once fielded, will be robust enablers to the seabased MEB.

The U.S. Navy must provide enough dedicated amphibious lift for each MEF to embark one MEB composed of its headquarters and three MEU equivalents. Once the U.S. Navy does this, the seabased MEB will be more than a concept.

The Marine Corps must transform to meet the challenges of today's security environment. Its expeditionary nature has served it well for over 200 years, but change is necessary now to meet emerging threats. Meaningful doctrinal, technological, and training changes have been effected, and many more, especially technological changes, will be made. Yet, the most enduring and necessary change is organizational change. Permanent MEBs will organize the Marine Corps for its most likely unit of employment in the coming era, and by this approach, the Marine Corps will enjoy the fruits of training in cohesive units, and realize the tenets of maneuver warfare. Marine Corps forces, in concert with the U.S. Navy, will be flexible, modular, and scalable, and will appropriately fulfill their niche in the Joint Force Commander's fight.

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